

# The Community Resource Kit

# Guidance for people setting up and running community organisations



# Section 11

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## Communications

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### THE COMMUNITY RESOURCE KIT

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## Introduction

Communication is sharing ideas and information. An effective community group communicates with a variety of audiences including their own staff and volunteers, the local community, stakeholders and the public. Your group can communicate about your goals, services and activities. Effective communication helps:

- raise awareness about an issue and influencing change
- informs people know what you're doing
- advertising and promotes services, products or events
- attracts new members, supporters and donations.

### What's in this section?

This section covers various aspects of communication, including:

- communications planning
- communicating with the public through the media
- communicating with central and local government.

While this section focuses mainly on communication activities that allow community organisations to raise concerns on behalf of their group and their members, the information can be applied to any communications, regardless of purpose.

### Communication tools

You can communicate with internal and external audiences through:

- written material, e.g. annual reports, fact sheets, articles, newsletters, pamphlets, posters, media releases, petitions, organisational policies, minutes of meetings, your website, general emails, social media and blogs etc. Key documents can be provided for staff and visitors in reception areas and on your website
- news media, e.g. newspapers, radio and TV
- phone calls
- direct public influence e.g. protests, public meetings, staff meetings, promotional events, speeches/public appearances
- advocacy (including lobbying and forming coalitions)
- submissions (written and verbal)
- networking (formal and informal).

This section explores the use of some of these tools, while others are covered by other sections of this kit (see Section 6 – Meetings and Section 12 – Information Technology).

## Communications planning

A communications plan helps your group:

- set priorities and focus resources where they are needed most
- clarify your aims and target audiences
- sharpen your message by having key messages
- understand the environment in which you'll deliver that message
- be proactive — avoid reacting only to external events
- integrate your communications work on a particular issue, i.e. media activities, lobbying, fundraising, communications with members, etc.
- ensure that everyone in the organisation can clearly communicate your aims and activities.

The first step in your planning should be forming a communications planning committee. The more members of your organisation participate in the planning, the more successful it will be. Try to engage staff, board members and volunteers in the process. You may even look at appointing someone to lead the committee; this will keep your planning work moving and ensure overall continuity.

## Communication planning process



Notes:

### 1. To finalise the communications plan:

- Get agreement and sign-off from all participants and organisational authorities. Be clear about the agreement so there are no surprises or problems within the group when the communication begins.
- Prepare for impact – what will the communication result in? Will handling increased calls and product demands require extra staff? Think this through.

### 2. To implement the plan:

- Check all stages are on track. Ensure you obtain sign-off and that delegated authorities are clear about their role – make sure everyone knows who is the spokesperson. You may need to monitor this.

### 3. To review progress:

- Define your review processes. How will you know if you have achieved your goals? How often will you review progress?
- Refine the strategy, vehicles or message if review suggests you should. Should you increase activity? Decrease? Promote the results or outcomes?

## Your communications plan

The end result of the full communications planning process is a written communications plan (see following template). The plan documents the process for effectively communicating with all of your audiences and stakeholders.

### Communications plan template

#### Executive summary

Write this last so you can tie in all information within the plan. Provide an overview of the plan. State the problem or opportunity and explain how communications can help. State the objectives and expected outcomes, and cite any research used in forming the plan.

#### Purpose/goal

State briefly why you are communicating and what you hope to achieve, e.g. inform the public, manage expectations, change behaviour, marketing etc. This doesn't need to be longer than a couple of sentences.

#### Background

Set the context. How did we get here and why do we need a communications plan? How does the project/communications fit with the group's objectives, purpose, vision and values? Describe the project and provide background.

#### Situation analysis

Consider the issues that might affect the way you communicate with your audiences/stakeholders. These may be political, environmental, socio-economic, legal, operational, etc. Think about types of communications initiatives that could help. Include any research, previous history or lessons learned from other projects.



## Objectives and measures

What are your communication objectives and how will you measure them? The objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely). You will need to have something to compare your measurements against so the objectives can be evaluated at the end. This may involve using formal or informal surveys, team meetings, face-to-face enquiries, unsolicited feedback to managers, team leaders, observation, etc. Note: Your communications objectives relate only to the effectiveness of your communications and shouldn't be confused with the overall project objectives – they are additional.

Communication objectives	Measures
E.g. To increase awareness of your services among new migrant communities by 20 per cent	Number of new migrants surveyed after the project who were aware of the services you provide, compared to those surveyed prior to the project commencing

## Stakeholders

Identify your key stakeholders. These are people or organisations that have an interest in the outcome of the project.

Person or organisation	Their interest	Our interest

## Target audiences

Who are the target audiences you wish to communicate with? Divide your audiences into internal and external. Remember to be specific e.g. the external audience may be the general public, but existing members of your group may need to receive a different message than prospective supporters. In many cases, there will be secondary audiences that need to get the message as well.

## Risks/issues and mitigation

Identify any communication risks or issues that might affect your project and outline how you will mitigate them. When identifying risks, be sure to make the distinction between what is a risk, and what is a consequence of a risk. Use the matrix below to determine the level of risk. Ensure the mitigation strategies are picked up in the Action Plan and responsibilities assigned.

Risk	Mitigation	Risk without mitigation	Risk with mitigation
E.g. The organisation will be criticised for lack of consultation	Consult as widely as possible, keep key stakeholders informed	Medium-High (8)	Medium-Low (2)

Use the following diagram to determine communication risks.

<b>Impact (if risk occurs)</b>	high	6	8	9
	medium	3	5	7
	low	1	2	4
		low	medium	high
<b>Likelihood (of risk occurring)</b>				

### Key messages

What are the messages you wish to communicate? Ideally there should be one key message or phrase people can remember and repeat, or no more than three to five important messages you want people to know. Develop a series of secondary messages to be used for different audiences or situations. These secondary messages could be in the form of questions and answers. Note: Messages are not 'explanations'. Keep them brief.

### Questions and Answers

Develop a series of questions that you most commonly hear about your organisation, and their succinct answers. Follow the 'who what why where when and how' formula. If you are holding an event, think about the questions you might be asked about its history and inspiration. These Q and As are for the use of anyone who might be asked questions by the media.

### Tools and tactics

What communication tool/approach or combination of tools will be most effective? Most communication strategies use several tools. For example a broadcast email will provide a different result from an email direct from the chief executive, which will differ again from using staff meetings. A media release is a cost-efficient way of getting information to the general public, but there is no guarantee of publication, whereas a paid advertisement is guaranteed to run. Other tools to consider include newsletters, your website, fliers, posters, brochures, face-to-face meetings, blogs, etc.

### Timing

Your group's communications plan is for the whole year. You can also have a communications plan for any events you want to run or campaigns you want to promote which will re-state your key messages and add ones relevant to the event.

- when do your group's main events happen?
- when are projects or other milestones happening?
- what else is happening during the year e.g. is it election year? — what impact will that have? When are school holidays, with people away?
- include key project milestones or events that you want to tell your stakeholders or audiences about.

## Budget and resources

Factor in how much communications will cost. You need money for everything from design to paper to advertisements and you may need to pay for some external communications expertise.

## Action plan

Outline what needs to be done, who will do it and when. Make sure all those with responsibilities agree to them. Your communications plan will need to be regularly monitored and updated. Identify whether it is the project manager, project sponsor or who has final sign-off on materials.

Date/Timing	Action	Responsibility

## Monitoring and evaluation

Monitor the effectiveness of your communications plan as the project is implemented, and change your tactics if necessary. Get together at the end of the project and determine whether your objectives were met, and work out what you would do differently next time. For thorough evaluation you might want to take a simple survey of some members of your target audiences to see if your message got through.

Tip: SPARC offers the guide *Creating a Stakeholder Communications Plan*. It details an eight-step planning framework designed for those who don't have a communications background. It offers examples and prompts that aim to help you think strategically in order to develop a pragmatic communications plan. Available from: <http://www.sparc.org.nz/en-nz/communities-and-clubs/Toolkit-for-Clubs/Resources1/>.

## Communicating via the media

The media (newspaper, online, TV or radio) is probably the most effective channel for voluntary and community organisations to communicate a message to the outside world. The public gets much of its information on events and issues from the media, so it is influential in framing public perception and also setting the public policy agenda.

Community groups can use the media to:

- publicise forthcoming events
- make announcements e.g. a new key appointment
- support local or national awareness weeks/days e.g. international volunteers day
- comment on issues
- promote the importance of their role in the community, or
- publicise a new service

Some advantages of using the media include:

- the ability to reach a very wide range of people (i.e. good coverage)
- it's usually free
- it can be organised at relatively short notice.

## **Good relationships with the media**

An ongoing relationship with the media, based on respect and professional integrity, will stand your organisation in good stead and help raise your public profile. Once such a relationship is established, it should make any future contact with the media easier.

Keys to good working relationships with the media include:

- Have one designated and mandated media spokesperson who can concentrate on building rapport with the media. Choose a person who has an in-depth knowledge of the organisation and an ability to articulate ideas clearly in an enthusiastic manner.
- Be honest and tactful. Never exaggerate or distort facts – people working in the media are savvy and check facts. Exaggeration and distortion lead to loss of credibility next time you offer a story.
- Approach the media only when you have something really newsworthy to offer.
- Don't keep people waiting, be prepared, be patient, don't hassle and don't quibble about small matters like appointment times. Journalists are busy people who work in a world of pressures and deadlines.
- Be welcoming and have a copy of your media release and a media kit on hand.
- Deal firmly but politely with media demands that you are not able to meet. Do not allow yourself to be coerced in any way. If you have checked and cleared your facts, you have nothing to worry about.
- Pitfalls to avoid when working with the media include:
  - Don't use the media as your publicity agents. They have strict codes of ethics and will not be manipulated. Their job is to report and interpret news honestly.
  - Don't get offside with the media – you won't win, and you will lose future news opportunities for your organisation.
  - Don't be fussy or pedantic. Everyone makes mistakes. Often mistakes are not glaringly obvious – except to you. Unless there is an obvious legal or financial reason for drawing a mistake to their attention, let it go.

## **What's newsworthy?**

'News' usually interests a general audience rather than just a few individuals. Generally speaking, newsworthy events are new events, but something can also be presented in way that looks new. Timing plays a large part in newsworthiness, as does a link to some other major event or news.

Ask yourself these questions to determine whether something is newsworthy:

- does your news item have human interest and touch the lives of many people?
- does your news have drama?
- does your news include people in high places?
- is your news fresh?
- who will read your media release?

## Checklist for approaching the media

Your approach to the media should be well planned and executed. Some guidelines include:

- appoint the best media spokesperson you possibly can
- get in touch with media well before an event
- approach the journalist most concerned with your area of work or type of story. If you don't already have a contact, approach the chief reporter
- always make your approach in person but make an appointment first
- deal with only one journalist in each news organisation
- be obliging and helpful
- be completely honest about story content
- cover Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- be clear and accurate
- do not demand coverage
- do not expect repeat coverage unless you can offer something different each time
- supply a media kit (see following checklist)
- send a Notice of Event, or Invitation and if appropriate, supply two tickets to functions or events you would like covered by the media
- if a photographer is wanted, organise for someone to accompany them to supply information during the event – especially the correct spelling of names
- approach radio and TV as well as newspapers — do not refer to them as 'the press'.

## When the media comes to you

When the media calls you, do not respond with impromptu comments unless your group has already agreed:

- that you will be the spokesperson, and
- the key messages to be conveyed.

If the media call is unexpected or relates to a contentious or tricky issue, take some time to compose your response:

- ask exactly what the call is about and what they want to know, e.g. 'what questions do you have?'
- say you will call back as soon as you can, that you need to check facts or get an update
- ask about the deadline for:
  - your group's response, or
  - the story as a whole – is it part of an ongoing story?
- refer the request to your appointed media spokesperson. If you don't have one, and you want someone else to handle the request, don't give a reporter their contact name or phone number until you have checked with that person first. Then get that person to return the call to the media.
- if you promise to call back, always do so, even to say you don't wish to discuss the matter any further (give a reason). This gives you credibility.
- remember that a reporter is always taking notes. Radio and TV reporters will record the interview for their bulletins, and some other journalists record conversations as a way of taking notes – they should ask your permission first.

## Media kits

A media kit is a collection of printed information you have about your group. It might be a single page or a series of flyers and brochures of information about your group. Also have this information in document or PDF form to email to the media or available online. Include

- your organisation's mission statement and/or philosophies
- the structure of your organisation with current contact details
- examples of the work your organisation does, including photographs
- a copy of your latest magazine or newsletter
- any up-to-date leaflets or pamphlets, and
- details of your website, blog or social media pages.

## Media kits for events

Before an event make sure all the key people associated with the event have a copy of your media kit and are familiar with its contents. Send or email your media kit to the media, which could include:

- any relevant biographies (e.g. of a performer or invited speaker)
- details of the content or reason for the event
- photographs
- copies of any reviews
- contact names and phone numbers for the event
- any relevant posters or newsletters, and
- tickets to any paid event.

## Photographs

Make your photographs uncluttered and interesting. Take pictures of people doing something and being active. Have good focus, contrast and exposure and get close to the action. Provide a caption with the date, event, the activity and the names of the people if possible. Ask permission to use the names of people in the pictures.

Have digital photographs in high resolution so that you can use them in your own newsletters or supply the media if requested.

## Media releases

Write a media release for any event or announcement. The release can be sent out to media as a follow-up to a preliminary phone call. It is the key to building a successful relationship with any media and should accompany all approaches for news coverage.

## Notice of event

A Notice of Event is an invitation to an event you are organising; it is sent to media at least a week before the event. Explain what is happening, when, where and why, who will be attending. Give a summary of events so that the media knows if it is appropriate to send a photographer to your event. A Notice of Event does not require quotes from anyone, but it is essential to include a contact name and phone number so the media can arrange the best time to attend your event.

## How to write a media release

A media release needs to 'inform' people, not sell them something. If you are new to writing a media release, grab the latest daily newspaper and read some of their articles or find someone to help who has the necessary experience.

### Media release checklist

A checklist of things to remember when writing a media release are:

- head the release MEDIA RELEASE
- give it a punchy, succinct title
- date it
- state the source of the release i.e. who it is from
- use the first sentence and the first paragraph (the 'intro') to convey the main message i.e. the essence of what you want to communicate
- focus on what is unique and interesting about your story
- give as many facts as possible (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?)
- write in a simple straightforward style
- use active language e.g. write 'Large crowds attended the opening' rather than 'The opening was attended by large crowds'
- make the release as short as you can (seven paragraphs is a usual maximum)
- remember that anything you say may be put at the beginning and used as the main point of your story
- have a spokesperson, preferably one of your group's office holders – use direct quotes
- format double-spaced with wide margins using one side of A4 paper
- write 'ends' at the end of the media release
- give names and contact details for people who can offer more information, or might be interviewed at length or for a 'sound-bite'
- give media outlets (radio, TV, newspapers, etc.) equal opportunity.

## Sample media release

MEDIA RELEASE

**[Date]**

**[Headline]** Young people raising their voices

**[Introduction or angle]**

READ MY LIPS is an exciting one-day event, aimed at getting young people's voices heard by society's decision-makers.

*This paragraph answers the 'what?' question, as well as giving an 'interesting' angle or fact to get the reader's interest. It shouldn't be longer than 35 words.*

**[Body]**

The READ MY LIPS event has been created by a group of young people from Wellington wanting to encourage more youth to speak out about the issues that are important to them. The event, on 15 May, at the Smith Hall in Wellington, aims to fire up their thoughts and passions and offer help with ways to get their voices heard.

*This paragraph has the 'when?' and 'who?' questions.*

READ MY LIPS secretary Jo Bloggs says the event offers training workshops for young people.

'It's about how to write submissions, organise events, and other ways to get their voices out to the public. Young people will be talking about local and global youth issues, and encourage others to speak out on things that are important to them.

*This paragraph gives more information about the event and who will attend.*

'Young people are often overlooked by our politicians and our voices aren't often heard. We are here to share the skills to make a change and get our message out there,' said Jo.

*Quote from someone involved in the event, which also answers the 'why?' question.*

READ MY LIPS

15 May 2010

10am – 3pm

Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington.

*Event details*

ENDS

**[Contact]**

For more information contact: Jo Bloggs, Ph 123 4567, joeb@here.org.nz .

<http://www.myd.govt.nz/about-myd/publications/aotearoa-youth-voices-toolkit.html>



## Distribution

Who do you want to know about your event or group? Have a list of the media you want to contact – is it local media, regional media or the whole country, or international? Have a list of all appropriate media and choose the ones you want for each media release. List the info@ email addresses, or generic newsroom addresses, not individual email addresses because journalists might be out of the office.

Find out how each newsroom wants to receive information – some smaller newsrooms still use fax. Others do not like to have attachments to emails and prefer you to cut and paste your media release in the body of the email. You can follow up your media release with a phone call to newsrooms you particularly want to target.

Upload the media release to your own website and link from your social media and blog pages. Email links to your associate groups so they know what's happening.

You can opt to send your media release through one of the online news outlets. Websites such as Scoop (<http://www.scoop.co.nz/>) and Newsroom (<http://newsroom.co.nz/>) publish media releases directly at no charge, and CommunityNet Aotearoa has a free news noticeboard (<http://www.community.net.nz/communitycentre/news/>).

## Doing media interviews

For many people, being interviewed by the media can be a stressful experience. To get your message across clearly and make the most of an interview, it pays to be prepared.

### General media interview checklist

Some general tips on interviews for radio, TV or print include:

- find out the reporter's name (ask for a business card)
- find out the context of the interview
- be on time for the interview
- do your homework – get the facts and have back-up data on hand
- know the main message you want to convey and how to weave it into every answer you give. That way, even if your answers are cut and spliced during the editing process, your message will still come through
- write down answers to any questions you think may be asked – you can use these as a prompt, which is really useful if you're feeling nervous. Know what you want to say and say it.
- speak clearly using short natural sentences, and take your time
- keep to your topic – don't ramble
- ask for clarification if you don't understand a question
- if you don't know an answer to a question, be honest and say you don't know. You can say that you will get back to them with an answer later on
- don't let the interviewer 'rattle' you. Keep calm and respond politely and firmly. Move or lean forward into the interviewer's space if you feel they're getting hostile
- if you think you've made a mistake or said something that's wrong, don't be frightened to tell the reporter or ask them to fix it
- relax and enjoy it as much as possible.

## TV and radio interview checklist

Specific tips for TV and radio interviews are:

- remember that TV is radio with pictures. This means that, for TV, you need to appear as relaxed as possible – smile when appropriate
- for TV, think about what you're wearing
- concentrate on the interviewer rather than any background technical processes
- if the interview is pre-recorded, stop and re-start if you want to change something
- for radio, because no one can see you, or read what you have said, this means your voice and how you use it is really important. Use a warm vocal tone and lots of inflection when making your points
- ask if it's possible to get a list or indication of the questions you'll be asked ahead of time but accept that the interviewer might change the question line according to your answers.
- for radio, even though there are heaps of people listening in, imagine you are talking to just one person
- it's good to have just one or two key messages to finish the interview on, so people go away with that in their minds.

Tip: For more tips on preparing for a media interview, visit: <http://www.fullcirc.com/rlc/mediainterviewprep.htm> .

## Corrections and complaints procedures

If you feel you have been misquoted, your comments taken out of context, or that you have been unfairly treated, there are procedures for correcting or complaining about what the media has said. These include:

- If it is a matter of wrong fact(s), you can simply ask the media to correct it.
- If it's a matter of varying interpretation, weigh up whether you want to raise the matter again in the public eye. If you want to proceed, write a letter to the editor rather than demand a different version.
- If you have been misquoted or mistreated, go direct to the head of the news section and say so.
- Formal complaints should be a last resort. However if you wish to proceed, there are formal procedures:
  - For written media (including websites) – contact NZ Press Council, see: <http://www.presscouncil.org.nz> .
  - For radio or TV – contact the Broadcasting Standards Authority, see: <http://www.bsa.govt.nz/> .

## Communicating with government

One of the roles of community groups is to bring issues to the attention of government so they can be addressed at a national or local level through legislation. Community participation is a vital part of democracy, and community organisations represent people and opinions that might not otherwise be heard.

## Communicating with central government

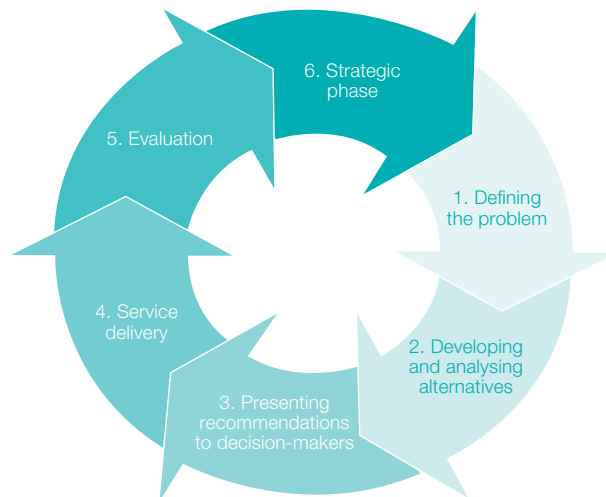
Some of the more common ways of having your say with central government include:

- lobbying
- making a submission to a select committee
- making a submission to a parliamentary inquiry
- petitions to Parliament
- official information requests
- talking or writing a letter to a Minister or your local MP (Member of Parliament).

### Government policy development

In order to influence government decision-making, it is useful to understand the typical pattern of policy development by central government. This is represented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Government Policy Development Cycle



Community organisations are typically involved in the policy development process at two stages:

- *Defining the problem* (stage 1) and *Developing and analysing alternatives* (stage 2). These are the stages when the government consults the relevant stakeholders. This should include consultation with relevant groups on issues that affect the community.
- *Evaluation* (stage 5). This is the stage when government agencies seek feedback on how well their policies and initiatives worked.

While there are no absolute timeframes for government policy development, there is an overall annual Budget cycle that can provide a general timeframe for focusing your efforts:

- the government financial year is from 1 July to 30 June
- Budgets are usually announced in May for the following year
- the first two stages of the policy development cycle will be going on up to a year earlier. By August/September of the previous year, the 'budget process' will be under way, with government officials developing proposals. However, groups should note that there are always more proposals than available funding, so many worthwhile proposals do not make the cut.

## Lobbying

Lobbying is a planned effort to advocate and influence political decision-making. Some lobby groups (such as the Business Roundtable) are rich and powerful and able to put a lot of resources into lobbying. Community groups seldom have much in the way of resources, but they do have the most important resource of all: people, and as a resource they can be as powerful as money.

Lobbying is important because:

- what you have to say can make a difference to policies and legislation
- it is a legitimate part of a democratic system – allowing people to have their say
- it provides a vehicle for you to communicate your kaupapa, philosophy, values or beliefs
- your perspective and knowledge is valuable and unique. Members of Parliament, policy-makers, councillors and officials need to be informed by people working at a grassroots level, from which they are often removed.

Successful lobbying usually involves both direct and indirect lobbying. Direct lobbying involves meeting face-to-face with political leaders and others of influence, discussing proposals and arguing your cause (see direct lobbying checklist). Indirect lobbying can involve bringing pressure to bear through the media so that an issue receives public attention, in preparation for a direct approach. It may also involve visiting opposition party members or opponents in the business community.

### Direct lobbying checklist

The following checklist can be used as a guide to directly lobbying someone, including a Minister or local MP:

- make appointments with those you want to lobby and ask how much time is available so you can use it to your best advantage
- have two or three well-briefed speakers
- prepare a written summary of your case, your organisation's origin and credentials and its area of work, refer to it at the meeting, then submit it when you depart
- agree on the order of speaking and the issues each speaker will address
- assign someone to be the record-keeper
- arrive five minutes early
- introduce your party
- note who is present and who you might best contact later
- make your most important points first
- be ready to summarise if your time is cut short
- understate your case rather than overstate it – you only want the person to agree with you, not join you
- be prepared for questions and know what are your long-term as well as your immediate goals
- present your case clearly and base your arguments on solid facts
- use visual aids if possible
- be confident or at least give the appearance of confidence
- leave when you have covered all the ground
- write a note of thanks for the time you were given to present your case.

**In the case of a local Member of Parliament (MP), where electorate ‘clinics’ are usually run on Saturdays and/or Sundays:**

- make an appointment through the electorate office
- remember the meeting is more informal and probably shorter with less media interest than a Parliamentary visit
- make a particular effort to gather and summarise expressions of local support (which to an MP are potential votes)
- be as prepared as you would be for a Parliamentary visit.

Tip: For more information on lobbying, see *Political Lobbying: How to plan and deliver a strategy* written by former MP, Tim Barnett: <http://www.volunteerwellington.org.nz/> .

### **Making a submission to a select committee**

Making a submission to a select committee is a good opportunity to have your voice heard by government and be part of the decision-making process. Essentially, this is giving your opinion on a new law (all of which start life off as a Bill) or a change to an old one.

#### **Select committees**

There are up to 13 subject-area select committees, each focusing on one or two national topics like health or justice. There are also five specialist select committees which deal more with procedural matters, plus any number of ad hoc committees that are set up from time to time for particular purposes. About seven to 12 MPs from different parties in Parliament work on each select committee; committee membership can change.

Tip: For more information on all select committees, visit: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/SC/>

The current 15 subject select committees are:

- **Commerce** – business development, commerce, communications, consumer affairs, energy, information technology, insurance and superannuation
- **Education and Science** – education, education review, industry training, research, science and technology
- **Electoral Legislation** – to consider and report to it on such legislation concerning the referendum on the electoral system and reform to the electoral finance regime that may be referred to it.
- **Emissions Trading Scheme Review** – to review the Emissions Trading Scheme and related matters.
- **Finance and Expenditure** – audit of the Crown’s and departmental financial statements, Government finance, revenue and taxation
- **Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade** – customs, defence, disarmament and arms control, foreign affairs, immigration and trade
- **Government Administration** – civil defence, cultural affairs, fitness, sport and leisure, internal affairs, Pacific Island affairs, Prime Minister and Cabinet, racing, services to Parliament, State services, statistics, tourism, women’s affairs and youth affairs
- **Health**
- **Justice and Electoral** – Crown legal and drafting services, electoral matters, human rights and justice

- **Law and Order** – corrections, courts, criminal law, police and serious fraud
- **Local Government and Environment** – conservation, environment and local government
- **Māori Affairs**
- **Primary Production** – agriculture, biosecurity, fisheries, forestry, lands and land information
- **Social Services** – housing, senior citizens, social welfare, veterans' affairs and work and income support
- **Transport and Industrial Relations** – accident compensation, industrial relations, labour, occupational health and safety, transport and transport safety.

The five current specialist select committees are:

- **Business** – facilitation of House business
- **Officers of Parliament** – appropriations and appointments of the Auditor-General, the Ombudsmen, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
- **Privileges** – matters of Parliamentary privilege
- **Regulations Review** – examination of legal instruments variously known as 'regulations', 'delegated legislation' and 'subordinate legislation' made under delegated powers in an Act of Parliament
- **Standing Orders** – House procedures and practices.

One of the jobs of the select committee is to examine Bills and then report back to Parliament. The select committee finds out what New Zealanders think through a public submission process. This means that anyone can see what you (or your group) have said.

### How do you know what Bills are being proposed?

The New Zealand Parliament website has a section dedicated to select committees, where you can see the Bills that are currently before select committees, which submissions are being called for, the closing date for submissions and where to send your submission. You can also see submissions different organisations have made on Bills. Go to: [www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/SC/](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/SC/). Most Bills are also advertised in the 'public notices' section of newspapers around New Zealand to encourage submissions.

### The submission process

A submission may be written or verbal or a combination of both. You may speak to a written submission and it is usual to present written material to support a verbal submission. An effective and powerful submission is a simple one that sets out your own or the group's views on the subject.

### Written submissions

Some useful tips for making a written submission to a select committee are:

- Get a copy of the Bill you wish to make a submission about. They can be bought from Bennett's Government bookshops or Bills Digests can be downloaded from the New Zealand Parliament website – <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Legislation/Bills/BillsDigests/>. The digests summarise the content of the Bills and are easier to read than the Bills themselves. Each digest also contains a link to the document of the Bill in full.
- Discuss the Bill as a group. Do a bit of research. What are other people saying about it? It might be useful to plan your submission with other groups who share your views.
- Sort out the key points you wish to make about the Bill. In most cases limit this to one to three main points to keep your submission focused.

- Write your draft submission. Say:
  - Who you are – give your credentials for making a submission on the Bill. Include your name and contact details.
  - Whether you support or oppose the Bill – and why.
  - What impact it might have on the people that you work with.
- Keep your submission short and to the point. Use subheadings for the different points you make.
- Try to be constructive – even when you totally oppose the Bill.
- Get someone else to check your submission before you send it off. Ask them to check:
  - how clear your message is – does it make sense?
  - that the submission keeps to the subject of the Bill
  - if anything needs more explanation. Remember, you are the expert in your field, you can't expect the members of the select committee to know the details about your area.
  - spelling and grammar – it all makes an impression.
- Say whether you want to appear before the committee. This can be very useful to make a point – especially if you are based in or near Wellington, or the committee is hearing submissions in your area.
- Check the closing date, how many copies you need and send it off. Remember to keep a copy – especially if you are going to appear before the committee.

### **Oral submissions**

- Some tips on appearing before a select committee and presenting an oral submission are:
- Find out who is on the committee and, if possible, what their views might be. Identify your potential allies on the committee. Your task is to help them build their argument for/against the Bill.
- If you can, go along to a meeting of the select committee and observe how it operates. A weekly schedule is posted on the Parliament website: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/SC/>. This indicates what sessions are open to the public.
- Appearing before the committee is an opportunity to put a human face to your submission. You will be invited to present your submission and then answer questions. Keep your presentation short and:
  - introduce yourself, your group and your credentials for making a submission on this topic.
  - outline the key points in your submission very briefly, but don't go into details. Committee members will have already read your submission so you don't need to read it out.
  - give an example of how this proposed legislation will affect people you work with. This adds a personal touch that can get the committee members more interested than statistics.
  - don't be put off by difficult questions – stick to your points and what you know. It's a good idea to make sure you have someone with direct fieldwork experience who can illustrate your points with anecdotes and examples that give the human dimension.



Tip: For further details on the submission process (written and verbal), refer to the booklet *Making a Submission to a Parliamentary Select Committee* available from the Parliament website: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/HowPWorks/Procedures/> .

The Ministry of Youth Development's *Presenting a submission to a Select Committee action guide* will also be useful: <http://www.myd.govt.nz/about-myd/publications/aotearoa-youth-voices-toolkit.html> .

<http://www.decisionmaker.co.nz/guide2003/hpw/selectcoms.html#submission>

## Parliamentary inquiries

Select committees can also hold inquiries within their subject area in response to some community concern. They can call for public submissions and request evidence from organisations that may be the subject of the inquiry. After considering the evidence, committees may report to Parliament with findings and recommendations. The Government must respond to recommendations within 90 days.

These parliamentary inquiries vary in nature according to the relevant concerns at the time. Examples of some recent inquiries include:

- inquiry into the operation of the Māori Community Development Act 1962 and related issues by the Māori Affairs Select Committee (initiated 29 July 2009)
- inquiry into how to improve completion rates of childhood immunisation by the Health Select Committee (initiated 12 February 2010)

Tip: You can find out what inquiries are open for submission by referring to the New Zealand Parliament website (under 'Committee business summary: Other business before select committees') – <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/SC/> .

## Working parties / advisory groups

In many policy areas, government agencies may establish joint working parties or advisory groups that include representatives of community organisations. Some examples of significant policy projects that involve community sector representatives are:

- the Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector's Generosity Hub project to raise the level of giving in all its forms in our communities
- the Ministry of Social Development's Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families, including the Campaign for Action on Family Violence initiative.

Typically, these groups will call for formal submissions from the community sector during a consultation period and may also hold consultation meetings and hui to hear community views.

## Petitions to Parliament

People can request that the House of Representatives take action on a matter of public policy or law, or to address a personal grievance, by presenting a petition to the House, through their local Member of Parliament (MP).

A petition is a document signed by one person or many people. The petition is referred to the appropriate committee, which decides whether to seek submissions from affected people or organisations. If the committee reports to the House with recommendations, the Government must respond within 90 days.



Petitions don't generally contain the same large amount of supporting evidence as a submission. However petitions should:

- have the front page signed
- have each page containing signatures headed with the petitioner's request
- use respectful, moderate, and to-the-point language
- not have any attached documents.

Tip: For full details on how to prepare a petition and the petition process, refer to the booklet *Petitioning the House of Representatives* available from the 'Get involved' section of the New Zealand Parliament website – [www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/GetInvolved/](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/GetInvolved/)

### Official information requests

Official information is any information held by government, including:

- government Ministers
- government departments, organisations and state-owned enterprises
- the New Zealand Police
- city, district or regional councils
- school boards of trustees, universities, polytechnics and other tertiary education institutions, and
- district health boards.

Tip: A full list of the organisations you can request information from is listed in the *Directory of Official Information* available from the Ministry of Justice website: <http://www.justice.govt.nz> .

### The law

The two Acts governing access to official information are:

- the Official Information Act 1982
- the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

The guiding principle is that information must be made available unless good reason exists under the Acts for withholding it.

### The process

Anyone can make a request for information from those people and organisations listed above and the process is the same for all of them.

Some useful tips on the official information request process are:

- Put your question in writing and explain clearly what you are asking. Remember to include your address so they know where to send a reply.
- All requests should be answered within 20 working days. If it will take longer, the organisation or Minister will tell you about the delay and the reason for it.
- Generally, the first hour of time spent processing a request and the first 20 pages of photocopying are free. A fee may be charged but this has to be reasonable and related to the cost of providing the answer to your request.

Tip: For more details on official information requests visit:

- Office of the Ombudsmen – *Official information complaints*: <http://www.ombudsmen.parliament.nz/> .
- Ministry of Justice – *Official Information: Your Right To Know* – <http://www.justice.govt.nz/publications> .

## Writing to politicians

Every day politicians make decisions about things that affect your community and your life. If you want them to make decisions that will be good for you and your community, write it down and let them know what you think.

You could write a letter by yourself, on behalf of your organisation, or you could organise a letter-writing campaign.

The first thing you need to work out is who the best person is to write to:

- **Electorate MPs** are usually interested in what people from their electorate think about an issue.
- **Cabinet Ministers** are the decision-makers in the Government and have areas of responsibility (portfolios). So write to the Minister who best covers the issue you are concerned about.
- **The Prime Minister (PM)** is the leader of the Government. Write to the PM about big national and international issues.

The relevant contact details for these people can be found in various places.

- Your local electorate MPs' contact details are available at: <http://www.parliament.nz/> .
- Cabinet Ministers, their portfolios and contact details are available at: <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/> . You can email MPs.
- You can write to any MP, Minister or the Prime Minister for FREE at:  
(Full name)  
Freepost Parliament  
PO Box 18888  
Wellington 6160.

Some important things to remember when writing to politicians include:

- explain why a particular issue is important to you and your community or New Zealanders as a whole
- don't assume that the politician will already know everything
- be clear and to-the-point
- be constructive
- always use facts
- make sure that you state your name and address, so that they can write back to you.

Tip: For more information on communicating with politicians, refer to the *Get involved* section of the Parliament website: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/GetInvolved/>

## Communicating with local government

### Local government relationships

While central government is mainly concerned with national issues, local government (which includes regional, city and district councils) has a local or regional focus. Local government has a responsibility for community 'well-being', which covers social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects. However, everything that local government does is within the legislative framework established and maintained by Parliament.

### Ways of having your say

There are different ways that you can have your say on local government matters. These include:

- making a submission on things such as:
  - a council plan (including the long-term council community plan or annual plan)
  - publicly notified resource consents
  - council consultation processes
  - other proposals
- official information requests (the same process as detailed for central government)
- attending public council meetings, and
- direct lobbying.

Tip: For more information on participating in local government see:

- [http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz/lgip.nsf/wpg\\_url/About-Local-Government-Participate-in-Local-Government-Index](http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz/lgip.nsf/wpg_url/About-Local-Government-Participate-in-Local-Government-Index) .
- [http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz/lgip.nsf/wpg\\_url/About-Local-Government-M%C4%81ori-Participation-in-Local-Government-Index](http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz/lgip.nsf/wpg_url/About-Local-Government-M%C4%81ori-Participation-in-Local-Government-Index) .

### Local authority planning

Under the Local Government Act 2002, local authorities must undertake a robust planning process. This starts with community consultation to determine the community's needs and wants (called community outcomes).

Councils then develop a plan showing which outcomes it can work with and how it will do so. Councils are not obliged to take up everything raised but must address the most important issues and aspirations.

Under the Local Government Act 2002, councils must prepare Long-Term Council Community Plans (LTCCPs) (Long-Term Plans for Auckland Council) every three years, and annual plans in the other two years. A key input into LTCCPs is the community outcomes process.

### Community outcomes

Community outcomes describe what people think is important for their local community, now and in the future. These community outcomes describe the aspirations and priorities of local communities, and are a guide for groups and organisations serving the community.

Community outcomes:

- are identified through a consultation process that local authorities must lead at least every six years. During this process the community discusses and prioritises the things that are important for its future, and how they can be achieved.
- are not the responsibility of a single organisation. Councils are not bound by them, but must report on them in the LTCCP and monitor them on a regular, three-yearly cycle.
- provide a guide to groups about what people want for their community. A wide range of organisations and groups within communities can contribute towards community outcomes.
- belong to the local community and can be changed only through consultation with the community.

Community and voluntary organisations can get involved in the community outcomes process in a number of ways, including:

- taking part in the consultation process – ways of consultation depend on each local authority and can vary from surveys to public meetings and hui to road shows
- making a submission to long-term and annual plans (see below)
- taking part in community projects – contact your local authority to find out when they are talking with their community, what they are discussing, and how to get involved in community activities.

Tip: For more information on Community Outcomes visit:  
<http://www.communityoutcomes.govt.nz/> .

### Long-Term Council Community Plans (LTCCP)

The LTCCP is the key long-term planning tool for councils and it sets out a council's priorities in the medium to long term. It outlines how the council intends to contribute to community outcomes and it provides the main opportunity for the community to participate in local decision-making.

The LTCCP is the primary planning document against which annual plans and annual reports are considered and against which communities can gauge whether or not councils are on track in terms of achieving the aims outlined through the community outcomes processes. Every three years, citizens have the opportunity to express their views on the LTCCP.

Tip: More information on Long-Term Council Community Plans and adopted 2009-2019 local authority LTCCPs are available from: <http://www.communityoutcomes.govt.nz/> .

### Annual plan

The annual plan process focuses on year-to-year budgets. Councils prepare an annual plan in each of the two years between LTCCP reviews, and set out what the council plans to do in the next 12 months to move towards achieving its goals. These plans are adopted before the commencement of the financial year in July, following a submission process.

## Annual report

The annual report tells the community whether the council has done what the LTCCP said the council intended to do. The report also provides details of what has been spent, as well as indicating what progress the council has made towards achieving community outcomes. Annual reports must be adopted by 31 October each year.

## Submissions

The submission procedures involved, and the relevant forms to be completed, are set out on your local council's website. Often there are online forms available on which to make your submission e.g. on publicly notified applications for resource consent. There may also be online survey forms available for other circumstances.

Tip: Details of all local council websites are available from: <http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz/>.

## Attending public council meetings

Anyone can attend any public meetings of the council or its committees. Councils meet as regularly as they consider appropriate for the issues facing their communities. They publish a monthly schedule of their ordinary council and committee meetings. These are usually found on the council's website or in the public notices of local newspapers. The public can be excluded from public meetings in certain circumstances.

## Lobbying

To lobby council officers, use much the same process as for a local MP.

- Make a preliminary visit to a council meeting to see who is most likely to be effective in your situation, or to hear a debate about the subject of your concern.
- Do some research to find out who is taking an active interest in the community and what position or opinion they already hold.

Tip: Most councils include copies of proposals currently out for consultation and the relevant consultation procedures for having your say on their website, or they are available from the council offices. For contact details visit: <http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz/>.

## Monitoring of local government performance

It is useful to know that there are a number of central government agencies involved in monitoring local government's performance, including the handling of complaints about the activities and operation of local government. For example:

- The Department of Internal Affairs provides information about local government to Ministers, councils and the public.
- The Office of the Ombudsmen will investigate complaints against local authorities if someone thinks they have been treated unfairly by a local authority.
- The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment considers complaints from people about a local authority in terms of any decision it has made relating to environmental issues.

Tip: Refer to the respective websites of these central government agencies for further information on how to get involved in their monitoring procedures:

- Department of Internal Affairs – <http://www.dia.govt.nz/>
- Office of the Ombudsmen – <http://www.ombudsmen.parliament.nz/>
- Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment – <http://www.pce.parliament.nz/>

## Where to go for more information

### Online resources

1. **CommunityNet Aotearoa's How-to Guides:**
  - *Marketing and promotion* (<http://www.community.net.nz/how-toguides/marketing/> )
  - *Campaigning and advocacy* (<http://www.community.net.nz/how-toguides/CampaignAdvocacy/> )
  - *Working with government agencies* (<http://www.community.net.nz/how-toguides/WorkingwithGovernmentAgencies/> )
2. **Working with the Media** - Te Papa He Rauemi Resource Guide – <http://www.tepapa.govt.nz/NationalServices/Resources/ResourceGuides/Pages/overview.aspx> . Advice on how to work with the media.
3. **ComVoices Communications Tool Kit** – <http://communitycentral.org.nz/comvoices/resources>. Outlines the basic principles for identifying news opportunities and generating media interest and coverage.
4. **Aotearoa Youth Voices Toolkit** – Ministry of Youth Development – <http://www.myd.govt.nz/about-myd/publications/aotearoa-youth-voices-toolkit.html> . A practical guide filled with tools and ideas on how young people can participate in decision-making.
5. **SPARC Club Kit** – <http://www.sparc.org.nz/en-nz/communities-and-clubs/Toolkit-for-Clubs/> . See Marketing and Promotion section.
6. **Creating a Stakeholder Communications Plan** – <http://www.sparc.org.nz/en-nz/our-partners/Developing-Capabilities/Publications/> . SPARC's guide to an eight-step communications plan designed for those who don't have a communications background.
7. **Funding Information Service resources** – <http://www.fis.org.nz/index.php?page=Resources> :
  - *How to write a Marketing Plan* – online guide to creating a marketing plan for community groups and not-for-profit organisations.
  - *Making the most of the Media* – a brief look at how you can get your message out using the media.
8. **NZ Marketing Association Best Practice Guidelines** – [http://www.marketing.org.nz/best\\_practice.php](http://www.marketing.org.nz/best_practice.php) .

9. **Our Community Resources** (AUS):
  - *Marketing and your Community Group* ([http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing\\_main.jsp](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_main.jsp) )
  - *Advocacy Help Sheets* ([http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/advocacy/advocacy\\_article.jsp?articleId=2384](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/advocacy/advocacy_article.jsp?articleId=2384) )
10. **Ten Steps to Stronger Nonprofit Communications** (US) – <http://www.socialedge.org/discussions/marketing-communication/ten-steps-to-stronger-nonprofit-communications-march-2005/> .
11. **Basic Press Outreach for Mission-Based Organizations** (US) – <http://www.coyotecom.com/outreach/promote2.html> – (non-profits, NGOs, civil society, public sector agencies, etc.)
12. **New Zealand Government – Participate and be involved** – <http://newzealand.govt.nz/participate/> . Papers/guides about participating in all government processes.
13. **New Zealand Parliament – Get Involved** – <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/GetInvolved/> . Sets out the formal ways to contribute to parliamentary work.
14. **Local Councils** – [www.localcouncils.govt.nz](http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz) .
15. **Local Government Online** – <http://www.localgovt.co.nz/> .
16. **Community Outcomes** – <http://www.communityoutcomes.govt.nz/> .

## Other resources

1. **Marketing and Public Relations on a Shoestring**, North Shore Community and Social Services. A comprehensive guide explaining marketing and public relations plans with tips on using the media. Order from: <http://www.nscss.org.nz/> .
2. **40 Marketing Must Do's**, Exult Ltd. An electronic-book that outlines 40 ways to make the most of a small marketing budget. Available from: <http://www.exult.co.nz/index.php?page=productspage#a14> .
3. **Managing Your Voluntary Agency in New Zealand**, NZFWO. See Chapter 7: Developing Public and Political Relations.
4. **Communications and PR Planning (for Non-Profits)** – IMPACS
5. **Aotearoa Youth Voices Toolkit**, Ministry of Youth Development – <http://www.myd.govt.nz/about-myd/publications/aotearoa-youth-voices-toolkit.html> .